

Tackling Discrimination in the East, a three year project managed by the Suffolk Law Centre and funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme



Impact, success & achievements
September 2016 to January 2019

January 2019



“Before accessing their support I felt like just another little person with no rights, facing a big company bully, and my health was really suffering badly. They got me to get my confidence back and argue my case against being discriminated at work. They were truly my life line.”

“I certainly wouldn't have been able to challenge my employers without them. They have empowered me to stand up for my rights without fear against my employer.”

“Without them I would not have been able to take action against my former employers. Being able to do so, and get a settlement from them, has helped me a great deal in the mental illness caused by discrimination and job loss. Absolutely invaluable.

“It has been a very positive and informative experience. I feel more empowered.”

“They saved my life by being a friendly face I could turn to for advice on a situation that's the most upsetting and damaging. They helped piece me back together and renew my confidence in the world.”

“They changed my life completely, supported me and gave me the confidence that I needed.”

– Feedback from beneficiaries of the Tackling Discrimination in the East

Tackling Discrimination in the East is a regional project aiming to improve people's wellbeing by addressing the legal issues of those experiencing unlawful discrimination who are unable to fund legal action themselves.

Illustrative Case Study: Bethany

“Getting the right legal advice was almost impossible until I was referred to Tackling Discrimination service in Ipswich, I felt so alone, and isolated with no one there to help. They stepped in and sorted out the discrimination I faced.”

Bethany was a young woman who as an apprentice faced disability discrimination. The company she worked for terminated her contract early citing issues around 'poor performance' despite knowing full well what her disabilities were and failing to make reasonable adjustments. Bethany had just received an assessment for autism.

As Bethany explains further:

“All was very difficult and stressful, and this was making my mental health even worse. I felt so vulnerable. And, this is where the team came in. The company I was working for disputed my disability and refused to accept any liability for the claims we were making against them. TDE steered me through this very difficult process, advising me and supporting me all the time: all very patient and understanding of them. They told me my rights and gave me confidence in myself to take the company on, and we won! It took a long time, but we got there. I got a financial settlement. It was brilliant, and it led me to believe in myself.”



Key Tackling Discrimination in the East project findings & learning

- In the project's final year of three year grant funding, the TDE project is excelling, achieving its outcomes, outperforming its targets (broadly by 25%), and undeniably achieving soundly based benefits for upwards of 500 socially disadvantaged, low income individuals experiencing unlawful discrimination; and in particular, for a large number that face disability discrimination. Over half of all beneficiaries had a disability; two-thirds of beneficiaries had an income of less than £1,000 per month; three-quarters of beneficiaries live in Suffolk, a quarter in Norfolk.
- There is now sustained, extensive and robust evidence of achievement and success, not only in reaching those most in need and experiencing unlawful discrimination, but in providing them with a focused set of strong legal advice, casework and related support that then produces tangible outcomes: real transformational person-centred changes, improved life circumstances and significant financial redress and settlements. The team secured £186,000 (so far) in financial settlements for beneficiaries.
- Case studies, interviews, feedback and surveys evidence that people are overcoming the unlawful discrimination issues that they present with; and 'exit' the project with enhanced levels of confidence and wellbeing; anxiety, depression and poor mental health is reduced. Services are greatly valued by beneficiaries: they believe that someone is there for them, supports them and has their best interests at heart. Satisfaction levels are very high. The Consultant team's findings underpin this, and feedback convincingly evidences the abundance of positive results, success and individual impact (refer to section 5, and 5.2 survey results).
- A well co-produced, relevant and insightful programme of public legal education and information has been delivered successfully in a wide range of workshop settings including with disability organisations and schools. This is ensuring better all-round knowledge and understanding of unlawful discrimination, and increased abilities to avoid and challenge it.
- The project team has now secured an unlawful discrimination legal advisory expertise and reputation which is second to none, and in a region which lacks any other similar provision; the service is well established and a crucial part of the local infrastructure of support to those facing the life-impairing impacts of unlawful discrimination, refining their service delivery model (based on regular feedback, constant qualitative reviews and external verification of results) using all available resources to the utmost (both paid and unpaid), extended effective outreach, developed excellent partnerships with a whole array of relevant organisations and built pathways for engagement and active participation by project beneficiaries.



1. Introduction

1.1 About Suffolk Law Centre & the Tackling Discrimination in the East project

Prior to the recent establishment of the new Suffolk Law Centre in early 2018, Tackling Discrimination in the East (TDE) - focused on combating the life-impairing adverse impacts of unlawful discrimination - was project managed by the well-respected Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality (ISCRE) for almost five years. The TDE project services were extended, with funding support from the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme, in a seamless way from Spring 2013 onwards. The TDE project is now entering its sixth year of highly successful operation working across an area of benefit extending through the bulk of East Anglia: Suffolk and Norfolk.

Suffolk Law Centre (SLC) is a new subsidiary charity set up by ISCRE to underpin the expansion of the range of legal services that could be made available to local residents and in recognition and response to the increased vulnerability of many people denied access to Government funded legal aid, and in a region often described as a 'legal advice desert'. The SLC is overseen by a Board of Trustees and run on a day-to-day basis by a small team led by a full-time Director and sharing back office staff with ISCRE. A large number of legally trained and qualified volunteers, approximately 80 (from which 40 exist in the TDE project) provide support to the law centre. Of the 40 volunteers who have supported the TDE project since 2016, most are on placement as part of their law degrees; others are law graduates and non-practicing lawyers. Managed by the Director (1 FTE), the TDE project team includes three part-time Discrimination Legal Advisers (1.2 FTE) and a part-time Information Officer (0.6 FTE).

Tackling Discrimination in the East is a dedicated service providing free, high-quality, confidential legal advice and unlawful discrimination awareness raising. The service is accessed from its central Ipswich offices, and via monthly outreach clinics at Citizen's Advice centres in Lowestoft and Haverhill, and in Norwich (the latter at Norfolk Community Law Centre). Equal access to justice is central and is an underpinning organisational and project goal, which permeates all the team's thinking and actions.

Offering responsive casework, the TDE project aims to reduce discrimination on the grounds of age, race, disability, sex, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, gender assignment and sexual orientation and other linked equality themes 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010). People experiencing unlawful discrimination, and unable to access and/or fund the required legal support themselves, receive help from TDE's volunteer lawyers. These legal professionals are able to assist people facing a range of issues – in the context of unlawful discrimination – most commonly in employment and in access to goods and services. The services TDE offers include provision for making complaints against the police and as a third party reporting centre for hate crimes.

The overwhelming majority of TDE project beneficiaries are on low incomes, and from financially precarious backgrounds, and as income deprived individuals they face significant barriers accessing the legal advice and support required to overcome unlawful discrimination. Demand, locally and nationally, continues to surge for legal advice to tackle unlawful discrimination, however cutbacks in public funding and reduced eligibility for legal aid is causing an escalation in the barriers low income and income-deprived individuals encounter.

Furthermore, and vitally, the Suffolk Law Centre more generally and the TDE service specifically also helps organisations, agencies and employers in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors to understand the extent and nature of discrimination and inequality experienced by individuals and groups in fields such as the criminal justice system, housing, employment, education, health and social care. The aim is to encourage them to implement policies and practices which will eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity, and good relations, between all persons. The TDE project has offered an extensive public legal education and information programme, co-producing bespoke workshops to meet particular audience requirements.



1.2 About the evaluation team - Big Society Funding CIC

Big Society Funding Community Interest Company (CIC) was founded in 2011 by committed and enthusiastic voluntary and community sector consultants. It works across England, from Blackpool, to Leicester, Peterborough, Thetford and Ipswich, and in London – in Harrow, Newham and Barking & Dagenham. It was set up to support the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to build capacity and encourage people and members of community groups to become 'Big Society' activists and fundraisers – finding their own voices in shaping local services and increasing their abilities to better meet the needs of disadvantaged communities they care about. It is an independent and non-party political, not-for-profit organisation.

Bespoke consultancy support is provided to help with fundraising, business planning, marketing, beneficiary consultation/involvement, evaluation and impact reporting. The team working with Suffolk Law Centre (and ISCRE) since 2012 have been Mark Ereira-Guyer, Ingrid Gardiner and James Baddeley. Over several years, as part of the team's on-going and routine work in the sector, the directors have developed a close working relationship with ISCRE and subsequently the Suffolk Law Centre (SLC) focused on the improvement and development of Tackling Discrimination in the East project services.

In recent years, the Big Society Funding CIC team (and previously eg consulting) has advised SLC on how to design its monitoring and beneficiary consultation processes, and several reviews and evaluation reports have been produced assessing performance in relation to Big Lottery funded outcomes over more than five years, and hence its impact and service achievements. The results of all this previous work have complemented and then fed into the successful submission of two Big Lottery Fund applications, latterly in 2016, and initially earlier in 2012.



2. The Tackling Discrimination in the East (TDE) project

2.1 About the TDE project

In 2016, ISCRE was awarded further vital funding from the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities grants programme to continue providing and developing the charity's increasingly well-proven, tested and much in demand TDE project. With the formation of the Suffolk Law Centre the project management was formally then handed over by ISCRE to the new legal entity, and Big Lottery Fund approval secured as recently as September 2018. The latest project continues to focus on responding to the identified and multiple urgent beneficiary needs of those people living mainly in Suffolk and to a lesser (but growing) extent Norfolk (mainly via the monthly session held in Norwich); and over the course of the three-year grant, through this work, the SLC has aimed to tackle life-impairing discrimination (particularly in the context of disability and race) for 740 disadvantaged, marginalised people with no access to legal aid (this represented a reduced and revised number of beneficiaries) by:

- Raising awareness of their rights and how they can assert them
- Providing legal advice, representation, building capacity and improving mental wellbeing
- Increasing life, confidence and citizenship skills; and
- Promoting social inclusion and justice in Suffolk.

2.2 How will the evaluation findings and learning be used?

Big Society Funding CIC is producing this review and evaluation report identifying success, achievements and project impact for a host of interested third parties, including the Big Lottery Fund, Suffolk Law Centre and ISCRE staff, Trustees and volunteers and to provide feedback to the charity's numerous beneficiaries and local partners, so that all can learn from what has been achieved by the TDE project. The team are constantly engaging with beneficiaries to ensure that the service offer remains as relevant and as appropriate as possible.

Project managers are very keen to ensure that beneficiaries, actual and potential, are firmly part of the review, evaluation and impact assessment processes as this accords with their People in the Lead ethos and approach. The central focus of this report is to bring the voices of beneficiaries to the fore, and share their views and sense of how the TDE project has brought about real change and differences to their everyday lives, confidence, wellbeing and societal inclusion. Recent project success has been growing and extending the reach of the SLC and it is reported that many organisations across the country have sought guidance from the SLC team on how to develop and provide a similar discrimination legal advice project.

As with many charity evaluations, the report is intended to provide the twin benefits of learning about what has gone well during the project, so that the most successful approaches can be continued and replicated, and learning about what has not gone well or what could be better about the project, so that the SLC can make service improvements that enhance the experience for beneficiaries and generate even greater impact for the TDE project going forward.

3. Review and Evaluation – project outcomes, remit and methodology

3.1 Intended outcomes and indicators of success

This evaluation considers how far the TDE project has continued to make strong progress towards achieving project outcomes as originally set out in 2.1 in general terms and stated in its funding bid to the Big Lottery Fund; and in light of their subsequent revision. The full range of revised outcomes, outputs and milestones envisaged over the full project lifetime (up to August 2019) of Tackling Discrimination in the East service are as follows:

- **First Outcome: People who experienced unlawful discrimination will be enabled to better overcome related barriers to work, training and/or accessing services.**

Indicator 1: People using the service (receiving legal advice, casework and support) will report better knowledge and understanding of their legal rights and how to enforce them.

The predicted revised target number of beneficiaries over the project's lifetime is 400 people.

Indicator 2: People using the service will report improved opportunities within employment, training or accessing goods or services. The revised target number of beneficiaries is 200 people.

Indicator 3: People using the service will report increased confidence in challenging unlawful discrimination. The overall target number of beneficiaries over the project's lifetime is 740 people.

- **Second Outcome: People who experienced unlawful discrimination will improve their mental wellbeing.**

Indicator 1: People who use the TDE service report that it has benefited their mental wellbeing.

The revised target of people receiving legal advice, support and casework benefiting their mental wellbeing at the end of the project is 400 people.

- **Third Outcome: People, vulnerable to unlawful discrimination and harassment, will gain specialist knowledge, equipping them to recognise, avoid and challenge it.**

Indicator 1: People attending the workshops will report ability to recognise and confidence to challenge unlawful discrimination. The revised target of people benefiting by the end of the TDE project is 740.



3.2 Evaluation remit

The consultancy's approach to the evaluation focuses on the impact, success and achievements secured by the TDE project team during a little over 28 months of project operation since April 2016, and considers:

- To what extent has TDE achieved the three key outcomes along with indicators for each

Furthermore, the consultant team has been cognisant of the agreed project outcome indicators and examined whether TDE has:

- Built a strong, effective sustainable project that helps people who experience unlawful discrimination to better understand their legal rights and consequently, be more able to overcome barriers to work, training and/or to accessing services
- Improved the mental wellbeing and confidence of people who have experienced unlawful discrimination
- Improved the specialist knowledge of those people who are vulnerable to unlawful discrimination and harassment so they can recognise discriminatory activity, avoid and challenge it.

3.3 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation team conducted the review and evaluation as follows:

- Desk research, combined with two meetings with project managers, reviewing internal reporting and perceived successes/achievements allied to examining routine monitoring processes, 18 case studies and feedback surveys; and reviewing the earlier evaluation report completed by the Big Society team (after one year's project operation) in Autumn 2017;
- Completing a sample on-line feedback survey of beneficiaries (which built on an earlier beneficiary survey) to ensure a complete picture of impact; results based on an 8% sample totaling 26 beneficiaries;
- Interviewing 10 beneficiaries (on the telephone) after they had finished using TDE project services examining how they believed they had benefitted and seeking their views on cumulative impact.

In terms of the one-to-one interviews and the sample online survey questions prepared by the team, these aimed to examine whether beneficiaries perceived that the TDE service had achieved the above-mentioned outcomes and indicators, and to capture responses to the following broad questions:

- How satisfied were you with your experience of TDE's service?
- What was personally achieved to combat unlawful discrimination; and any perceived long-term impacts?
- How did TDE enable you to combat unlawful discrimination, and was there any long-term impact for you?
- Could anything be improved about TDE for future beneficiaries?

Illustrative case study – PATSY

“ I felt that my employers discriminated against me because of my disability.”

Patsy had been working for more than 14 years for a local company. As she approached retirement she was working part-time (12 hours per week), and because of emerging health and disability issues faced the prospect of being squeezed out of her job. Her employers were not taking reasonable actions to help her cope with the situation. They treated her poorly and dismissively. She needed the income very badly as the sole wage earner. She has a disabled partner.



Patsy reports that she was at ‘her wits end’, depressed and debilitated by the experience. She had high anxiety and was experiencing sudden and almost overwhelming panic attacks. She had sought help at Citizens Advice who had tried their best but not been able to help very much. Her income was very limited indeed. She didn’t know where to turn, and was losing all hope of resolving her situation.

She was referred to the Tackling Discrimination in the East project. She says:

“ Quite simply the project was a lifeline for me, and they immediately made me feel supported and valued. They said I had a good legal case. It was such a relief to be believed and that it was recognised that I had been discriminated against. The company I was working for, they were just lying.

My confidence grew, someone was on side and there for me, to help me; it was like a massive weight had been lifted from my shoulders. Little people like me need this kind of help against the big company bullies.”

Patsy won her discrimination case and is still working with the company. She received a financial award and an official apology.

4. The review and evaluation findings & consultant team analysis

Internal reporting & assessment of success

4.1 As outlined in our methodology, the team reviewed the TDE project's internal reporting, related project findings alongside routine monitoring and assessment processes, and considered all the information provided including a significant number of case studies produced to demonstrate impact and illustrate the wide range of unlawful discrimination issues presented to the team. Edited versions of three of the case studies are shown as below.

Crossing over three project years and by December 2018, the end of month 28 (from the total of 36 months), internal reporting, findings and monitoring show that:

Legal advice, casework and support

- The TDE project **provided specific legal advice, casework and support to 344 low income and income-deprived people who presented as experiencing unlawful discrimination;** having received these interventions the overwhelming majority reported improved understanding and knowledge of their legal rights and how to better enforce them. From a large sample of project beneficiaries during year 2 we learn that **nine out of 10** (89%, 166 from 187 people) said that they had improved knowledge and understanding of their legal rights and how to enforce them.
- In addition, the internal reporting team undertook small sample evaluations using a scale of 1-5 to assess individual improvement and differences achieved. Results were particularly pleasing in illustrating that people had a much better understanding of unlawful discrimination, the Equalities Act, what protected characteristics were, how they knew what actions they could take (with support) and their increased confidence to do so.
- Reporting shows that the project team is well on course to reaching its target by reaching, so far, 344 of the target 400 beneficiaries over the lifetime of the project; internal projections now show that it is likely overall that the TDE project team will have advised at least 500 people by the end of year 3 (August 2019) which is of course well over the revised target by 25%.
- **253 project beneficiaries, having received legal advice through casework, said that they now have improved employment, training opportunities or were better able to access goods and services.** From internal small-scale evaluation individual confidence levels in being able to retain their jobs and access education or training increased markedly, as did the increased belief in overcoming the barriers they were facing. More than **8 out of 10 beneficiaries** (83%, 155 from 187 people) who had received TDE legal advice through casework said that they had improved opportunities and could better overcome barriers to access employment, training, goods and services. Furthermore, reporting shows that the project team is already exceeding the target of 200 people, which is for the whole lifetime of the TDE project, by almost 27%.

Illustrative examples demonstrating achievement of outcomes and success
– provided by TDE project team

ABDI

Abdi was experiencing racial and religious discrimination in his workplace. Tackling Discrimination in the East (TDE) assisted him in seeking to raise concerns with his employers. When this, unfortunately, failed TDE applied for Early Conciliation for him. During this time the difficulties experienced by Abdi increased, and understandably he became increasingly stressed and worried by the situation. He wanted to leave his employment as soon as possible.

TDE were able to negotiate through ACAS a termination package, whereby Abdi could leave with a reference from his employers and a lump sum of £4,000. Abdi reported being very relieved to leave his workplace with immediate effect and was grateful for the lump sum to help him whilst he sought alternative employment.

KERRY

Tackling Discrimination in the East were approached by Kerry after she suffered harassment and abuse from her employers which she believed was due to her medical condition and disability. This was despite her meeting her workplace targets, and completing her work. Kerry said she felt her employers were not taking account of her medical condition. The treatment she suffered led to her being signed off sick because of the stress and consequent depression caused by the work situation. TDE advised her on her position and corresponded with the employers. When no resolution could be reached TDE applied for Early Conciliation.

TDE were able to negotiate a financial settlement for Kerry of £5,000 plus a reference. Feedback from Kerry was very positive, and she said she was pleased with this settlement and that the high levels of stress resulting from her situation had now lifted.

AMY

Amy has Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and worked full time as a retail manager, a job she had always enjoyed and did not want to leave. Because of her disability, Amy experienced significant fatigue and wanted to reduce her work schedule to enable her to continue working. Amy initially requested flexible working from her employer in error but, having sought advice from CAB and on referral to TDE, this was corrected to reasonable adjustments for disabled persons as per the Equality Act.

Amy's employer refused to make these reasonable adjustments citing business need and insisted that Amy continued to work her usual fulltime hours. As a result, Amy was compelled to go off sick as she struggled to manage her severe MS symptoms. After referral to TDE, legal proceedings for disability discrimination were issued on her behalf.

After an initial deadlock with the employers, a six-month trial period was negotiated incorporating the reduced hours and sales matrices to be satisfied to show no detriment to the business. In order to protect Amy's position, we also obtained agreement from the court to hold her claim open for six months until the end of the trial period should she need to proceed with her claim if the trial failed.

Amy has now successfully completed the trial period, satisfied the sales matrices and, as a result, the employer has agreed to include the reduced working hours into her contract of employment on a permanent basis. Amy was also awarded a financial sum to compensate her for the time she was on sick leave owing to the employer's refusal to make reasonable adjustments.

When speaking with project managers and asking them for a handful of indicative and outline examples on how they believe these project outcomes have successfully been achieved, several concrete examples were immediately reported to the Consultant including:

- Three separate clients successfully retained their jobs when their grievances against failure to make disability related reasonable adjustments were upheld
- A beneficiary was helped to win a grievance for racial harassment resulting in a written apology from their employer, a change of policy and retraining of all staff
- A successful appeal was made to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) following a decision by Suffolk Police to reject a complaint of discrimination
- One beneficiary with mental health disabilities was served with eviction papers for allegedly threatening a staff member. The team successfully helped him to negotiate a withdrawal of the threatened eviction based on the social landlord having not complied with the reasonable adjustments to how they manage tenants with mental health.

Improved mental wellbeing and confidence

- **A total of 516 people - 256 beneficiaries having directly received TDE project services and 260 people who have attended the project's various raising awareness workshops - reported that the services provided benefitted their mental wellbeing** (from an overall target of 740 people). Again, from the team's internal evaluation we learn that almost **8 out of 10 beneficiaries** (78%, 145 from 187) said that their mental wellbeing had been enhanced by TDE; individual uplifts in optimism and 'being in better spirits' were especially noteworthy, as was the reduction in anxiety. Furthermore, 84% (157 people from 187) reported an increase in their confidence in challenging unlawful discrimination. Feedback surveys from a range of workshops, including in various schools and on such issues as hate crime, clearly demonstrate improved understanding and confidence in dealing with such issues.

“The project was incredibly helpful and detailed when helping me with my case. The TDE team provides guidance to everything I need to do (for my case) by pointing me towards the right direction and providing sound advice as well as useful/relevant links (justice.co.uk, the Equality Act 2010, equalityhumanrights.com, judiciary.uk) in order for me to progress on my case.

Without their help and support, I would not have gained the confidence I have now to challenge the discrimination I have experienced at my previous work. TDE (and the Suffolk Law Centre) has played a big part and made a very big impact in my recovery for my mental health (anxiety and depression). ”

Sofia, Ipswich



Beneficiary quantitative monitoring

Throughout the TDE project lifetime the team have maintained excellent detailed quantitative records of all beneficiaries, enquires, case notes and files; and from reviewing a large sample of 244 beneficiaries we find:



Three-quarters reside in Suffolk, and one quarter in Norfolk; those coming from Ipswich and East Suffolk comprise 60% of all beneficiaries; only 11% resident in West and Mid Suffolk



4% were aged under 18, 51% were aged 18- 45 years, 26% were aged 46-55 years, 13% were aged 55-64 years, 2% were aged over 65



20% reported less than £400 per month, 15% reported £400 to £599 per month, 17% reported between £600 to £999 per month, and 24% between £1,000 and £1,499; 10% said over £1,500



54% Not disabled, 46% were disabled



White British – 38%, White Other – 14%, Asian/Asian UK – 7%, Black British & Mixed – 28%, Other ethnic group – 10%.



Christian – 49%, No religion – 34%, Muslim – 10%, Other – 7%



88% were English language speakers, 3% Portuguese, 2% Polish and 1% Romanian. 8% of beneficiaries required an interpreter



Heterosexual – 91%
9% - Lesbian, gay man, bi-sexual



44% male, 55% female

4.2 Of course, the service would struggle to reach all the people it currently does without the vital contribution made by up to **40 legal and administrative volunteers**, law students from the University of Essex on placement, law graduates and non-practicing lawyers; following an internal calculation we learn that this volunteer team (allowing for the full three year project lifetime) will have contributed **8,058 volunteering hours at the end of the project**. If we just use a simple method of calculating the value of this in monetary terms using the national minimum hourly wage of £7.83, the amount of monetary value this volunteering equates to is **£63,094**. If we applied the Heritage Lottery Fund volunteer hourly rates of £10, this would then equate to **£80,580**. The project team have made exemplar use of volunteer time, commitment and skills; and simultaneously, contributed extensively to the personal and professional development of (predominantly) young people at the start of their legal, and related, careers.

There are several comprehensive volunteer case studies available for viewing on the charity's website; reviewing seven of them it is clear that the project allows for many volunteers to get a real sense of achievement, contribution to their community and social justice alongside in many cases highly relevant work-related experience.

One TDE volunteer story – 'Why I volunteer' by Oliver Fuller

"I was interested in volunteering to gain hands-on legal experience having recently completed my Undergraduate Degree in Law. As a volunteer I am on hand to provide support and assistance to the legal advisors in any way I can. The variety of work I am asked to complete and diverse nature of legal problems we encounter on the project make volunteering both an exciting and rewarding experience.

The main body of work involves telephoning and drafting correspondence to clients in order to keep them updated on the progression of their case and chase-up any additional information we may require from them. Sometimes I provide assistance through conducting some individual legal research where I could be tasked with finding a legal precedent to strengthen our case or I could be asked to answer a very specific legal question. This gives me the independence to develop my research skills as well as the confidence to adopt creative solutions to what are often original legal issues.

I have been afforded the opportunity to draft a variety of important documents ranging from a letter to the Independent Police Complaints Commission to employment tribunal documents, an application to the Bar Pro-Bono Unit for legal representation to drafting statements from client interviews. The skills I've acquired are all incredibly valuable, comparable to those demanded and valued as a barrister.

Volunteering at the Tackling Discrimination in the East project provides the opportunity to work alongside the fantastic, warm and knowledgeable people who work tirelessly here. It is the perfect place for anyone looking to make a positive contribution towards tackling discrimination as well as those looking to gain an invaluable insight into the legal system and engage in some hands-on legal work."

4.3 Overall, it has been reported that the issues addressed in the legal advice casework and support were wide ranging, and often casework was complex and time-consuming - much more time has been used on many cases than originally anticipated and that the amount of time required for several highly complex cases were considerably exacerbated by staffing challenges, new staff recruitment 'drags' and ensuring new staff were properly trained. The level of legal support and assistance provided to clients has ranged from a single meeting, to several meetings over many months, up to a lengthy Employment Tribunal claim.

Of all of the cases, **35% concerned disability discrimination in employment** (including failure to do reasonable adjustments); **6% were disability discrimination in the provision of goods and services** (including in the administration of benefits); **22% were race discrimination in employment**; **13% were race discrimination in the provision of goods and services**; and a further **7% were pregnancy and maternity in employment cases**. The remainder (23%) are a mixture of discrimination in employment on the grounds of sex, gender identity, religion and belief or sexual orientation, and discrimination in provision of goods and services including housing, education, police, retail and leisure services on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

4.4 Financial compensation, references, apologies for beneficiaries and changes in organisational practice – the project team report that often financial settlements for beneficiaries are for comparatively modest sums, however it is very well worth reporting that so far the TDE project has secured **£186,000** for those whose claims of unlawful discrimination have been upheld; in addition the team secured vital employment references, official apologies and - crucial, for long-term impact - changes of practice by employers and service providers.

Two examples provided by the TDE team, illustrate how TDE cases resulted in the team compelling employers and service providers in changing their policies:

- For one beneficiary, disabled with a degenerative illness, employed as a manager in a retail store (a national chain with branches in most towns), after being forced to by legal proceedings, we were able to get them to provide reasonable adjustments to reduce her working hours. This allowed her to carry on working, which she could not do otherwise.
- The TDE team helped a deaf lip reader get reasonable adjustments to the telephone banking system of a multinational financial services company. This benefits many others reliant on lip-reading to overcome the challenges resulting from their deafness.

4.5 Outcomes achieved through legal casework – as remarked upon earlier, the TDE project team has undertaken their own outcomes evaluation looking at capturing baseline information for each beneficiary. As reported previously in 2016, the organisational challenge of gaining the necessary beneficiary feedback once they had finished using the TDE project services has proved very difficult, and at times well nigh impossible. However, taking all things into consideration, it's still pleasing to see significant movement towards achievement of outcomes in the limited amount of time the team have to capture baseline and completion data. The team are to be commended on their efforts, the results of which have been included in various internal reports and which convincingly underscore achievement of project outcomes.

4.6 Overall project performance has been impressive despite staffing challenges, two new part-time Discrimination Advisers had to be recruited, trained and supported into their new roles, and the project's Information Officer had a long spell of sustained illness. Outreach into west and east Suffolk, and across Norfolk (although not in Thetford as no potential beneficiaries were attracted to that outreach clinic), has proceeded well although it is noted that project managers have decided that the service can improve efficiency and still maintain accessibility by operating appointments from the Ipswich offices, and back this up with effective use of telephone appointments and email communication. In conversations with beneficiaries the consultants were left in little doubt as to the value that they placed on this regular telephone and e-communications; for many this level of 'back up' and support was vital in instilling a sense of wellbeing and having 'someone clearly on their side'. For others facing difficult and challenging everyday lives, securing the legal advice and casework support in this manner was highly valued and the most efficacious way of receiving it. Further internal evaluation (based on a simple feedback form) has revealed that several issues can, and often are, completed and resolved with all the

communications between the TDE team and the beneficiary undertaken solely by telephone and email, and no face to face meeting with an advisor taking place.

4.7 Media coverage for TDE has been pleasing and far-reaching – with much of the media presence tying in well with the overall promotion of the new Suffolk Law Centre, and this links well with the project manager's longer-term planning and sustainability strategy. Its social media presence (directed and led by the Director) is inspired, highlighting discrimination issues and flagging up important information. The SLC has 1,621 followers on Twitter (compared to 1,207 for ISCRE) and has 3.5 times more interactions (likes/comments) than ISCRE – 3,414 compared to 997 for ISCRE. With the official launch of the centre the TDE's profile has been lifted considerably, and a wide range of promotional materials have been produced and disseminated across the county. Its success in helping Andrew Everitt, a young man from Bury St Edmunds who had been working in a Subway takeaway, overcome his 'blatant case of disability discrimination' and secure an Employment Tribunal award of over £15,000 in late 2016 was instrumental to ensuring widespread local media coverage. Andrew had faced employment discrimination due to his disability, he had a learning disability.

4.8 Discrimination awareness raising workshops – alongside delivering individual casework and support to secure achievement of the project's first two key outcomes, the team have been active in the provision of discrimination awareness raising workshop sessions, and other more public legal education work that addresses harassment, hate crime and human rights issues (internally this is referred to as the 3 H's project: Harassment, Hate Crime & Human Rights). The latter, more recently, has focused on delivering co-produced, bespoke workshops in a school setting and as part of the school's Personal, Social, Health & Education programme. 230 school children have been beneficiaries of the nine workshops delivered so far in Suffolk.

“It's a great addition to our current PSHE programme”

Northgate High School Assistant Headteacher, Ipswich

“The workshop was incredibly helpful and full of information regarding disability services and access...”

Suffolk Coalition for Disabled People

Five further workshops have been delivered benefiting a further 127 people (the majority were disabled), three were provided to community groups on disability access to goods and services and two workshops were held on pregnancy and maternity employment discrimination. Participants completed outcomes feedback survey forms, which demonstrated uplifts in awareness of rights and how to access help, plus improved confidence in challenging unlawful discrimination (the lift in the latter, improved confidence, was especially marked). Further project learning was underpinned by the adoption of co-production with particular disadvantaged groups to ensure that information was accessible and meets varied needs. According to project managers the one major workshop with ACE Anglia (charity for people with learning disabilities) was highly instructive, and the workshop was delivered in Easy-Read format, and this has encouraged the team to embark on further work focused on overcoming the barriers for people with learning disabilities challenging unlawful discrimination.

“ More recently I partnered with ACE Anglia, a specialist advocacy charity in Suffolk for people with learning disabilities whose staff are a mix of Easy-Read practitioners and people with lived experience of learning disability. We wanted to use Easy-Read principles to write and present to a large workshop about discrimination in the provision of goods and services at their regular county-wide meeting for about 65 participants with learning disabilities...

It can't be assumed that the audience has literacy, cultural understanding, confidence or even interest in the subject. The people in most need of public legal education are often those least able to access it, so it is our job to bring it, in every sense, to them.”

Director of Legal Services, Suffolk Law Centre

4.9 As a key element of the TDE project's awareness raising and public legal education, a further publication (3 D's: Disability + Discrimination = Disadvantage) has been co-produced (using expert panel and focus groups) and designed to build best practice, and in anticipation of the introduction of Universal Credit, by way of a guide for disabled claimants around the 'right to reasonable adjustments'. Co-produced with Ipswich Disability Advice and Citizen's Advice, the guide has now been showcased and in collaboration with ACE Anglia a version is available in Easy-Read.

5 Consultants' external survey findings, beneficiary and partner interviews

5.1 Almost one in 10 people who have benefitted from TDE participated in the online survey; these were among those beneficiaries for whom the project team had specific, up-to-date contact details. The consultant team also carried out 10 telephone interviews with beneficiaries (three of which are highlighted in the report) and previously the team had surveyed and interviewed various partner organisations (see panel below). A fuller report on partner views was submitted in 2016), and these have all combined to provide an additional sense of beneficiary views on benefits and outcomes secured, and in a wider sense, the longer-term impact.

All those interviewed said that they had secured highly satisfactory outcomes in relation to the unlawful discrimination issue for which they had presented, and that they recognised that securing success was not easy (some were still awaiting a final decision at time of writing and after many, many months!), and required great diligence and energy on behalf of the TDE project team; the amount of paperwork, correspondence and overall procedural delays by the courts was remarked upon by all. Many acknowledged and commented upon the complexity of their case. Beneficiaries reported often feeling totally overwhelmed and 'out of their depth', and it was only by accessing legal advice and then having their case championed by TDE that the unlawful discrimination they were experiencing could be effectively challenged. Without the service, no person interviewed believed they would have succeeded in overcoming the barriers they face in addressing life-impairing discrimination.

All those interviewed expressed great admiration for the team and the quality of support offered, and they valued the clear sense of (as many reported it) having someone 'on side' who they could trust and was working in their interest. The improved sense of wellbeing and confidence was palpable, as was the realisation that without the casework help and support they would have failed in addressing the unlawful discrimination and lost their jobs, not accessed services and crucially, seen their anxiety and lack of wellbeing soar. From the interviews, the consultant team were apprised of the extent that the project helped prevent (or contributed in a significant way) to the arresting and even reversal of, declining mental health (particularly high anxiety, depression, lack of motivation) and wellbeing; and making sure that vulnerable, low waged and income-deprived individuals had a 'fighting chance' of asserting their legal rights and entitlements.

Feedback from partners and other stakeholders

"They are invaluable, the clients that we know and have referred to them have been able to save their homes, retain their employment status and much more besides."

Ipswich and District CAB

"Legal advice in the area very limited and Suffolk Law Centre provides an essential service with excellent expert advice."

Ipswich Housing Action Group

"Because we get advice from them and they are so helpful we can steer people towards the right support which is very helpful to them. We've learned a lot from them and about how difficult it is to judge if the discrimination which has taken place will stand up from a legal point of view and then to actually tackle this discrimination legally."

Suffolk Refugee Support

5.2 A total 26 beneficiaries who have accessed support from the TDE project responded to the online survey with the following key findings:

Feedback Survey Responses

When asked: If you were describing - to a friend or family member - the impact that TDE (Suffolk Law Centre) had made to your life, what would you say?

“I certainly wouldn’t have been able to challenge my employers without them. They have empowered me to stand up for my rights without fear against my employer.”

“Without them I would not have been able to take action against my former employers. Being able to do so, and get a settlement from them, has helped me a great deal in the mental illness caused by discrimination and job loss. Absolutely invaluable.”

“It has been a very positive and informative experience. I feel more empowered.”

“They saved my life by being a friendly face I could turn to for advice on a situation that’s the most upsetting and damaging. They helped piece me back together and renew my confidence in the world.”

“They changed my life completely, supported me and gave me the confidence that I needed.”

“A lawyer to help go to court.”

Tackling Discrimination in the East

Feedback Survey Results 2019

95%

accessed legal advice and support services (rather than training sessions) and benefitted from a one-to-one advisor

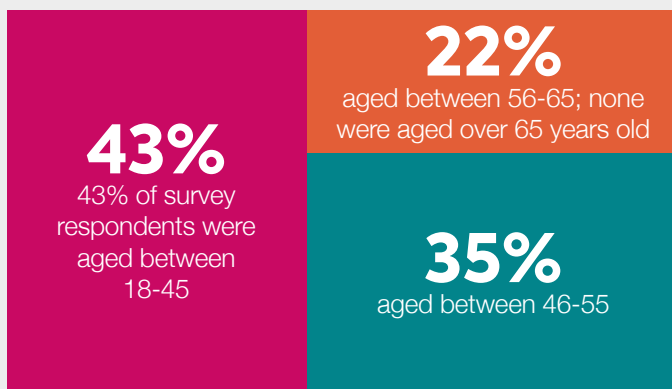
91%

would recommend TDE to other people experiencing discrimination

83%

reported being highly satisfied with the support provided, allocating the TDE service top marks, and that had helped them overcome their discrimination issue and the barriers faced in relation to employment or access to services

Survey Respondents

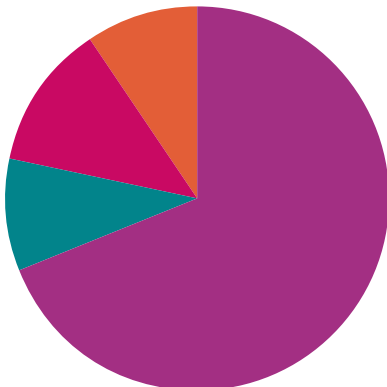


What people said in the feedback survey:

- **92%** now had better knowledge of their legal rights, and a better understanding of how to enforce them
- **Everyone** now had a better understanding of unlawful discrimination
- **Nine out of 10** reported an increased confidence in being able to challenge unlawful discrimination; and overcoming barriers to work and accessing services
- **8 in 10** reported improved mental wellbeing having accessed TDE services

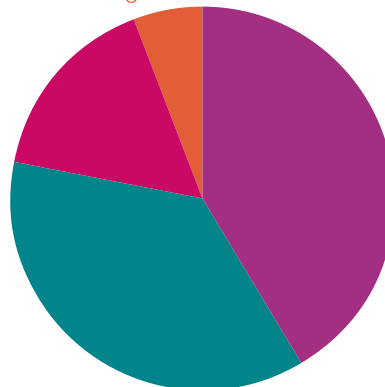
Ethnicity

Seven in 10 were White British (67%)
9% Black British
12% White Other
9% Asian



Types of Disability

44% Mental Health
39% Physical
17% Sensory
6% Learning



Employment Status

30% Unemployed
17% Working (full-time)
9% Working (part-time)
17% Long-term illnesses
9% Family carer
8% Student/in training



70% of survey respondents were disabled*

* defined as a physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's abilities to carry out normal day-to-day activities

The survey findings provide further evidence of the TDE project's success and achievement of key outcomes, and core findings reveal that:

- **Satisfaction with the service** - 83% reported that they were very satisfied with the support they received from the TDE project and allocated it high to top marks
- **Outcomes achieved through the TDE service** – outcomes achieved through the service now appear to be very strong indeed with almost all survey respondents reporting better understanding of their rights and increased confidence to challenge and overcome the barriers faced by those bringing unlawful discrimination; their wellbeing and mental health has improved.
- **Ways in which the TDE service had supported and helped beneficiaries** were plentiful and survey respondents were able to quickly and succinctly identify how the support and help had contributed to tackling the discrimination they faced. The incisive and illustrative comments taken from what the survey respondents themselves wrote are highlighted on the report's cover and on page 20.
- **Recommending the TDE service to others** – 91% would definitely recommend the service to other people facing unlawful discrimination.

5.3 The extensive range of project partnerships and collaborations should be recorded, as should the ability of the TDE project (and the wider Suffolk Law Centre) to network locally, regionally and even nationally. The project has been profiled and promoted in broad range of relevant fora: Suffolk Advice Network, Ipswich Borough Council Equality Panel, Ipswich Women's Festival and at University of Suffolk to name but a few. Nationally, at the Legal Aid Practice Group, Human Rights Conference both in London, Citizens Advice Annual Conference in Manchester and at the Living Rights Conference in Birmingham.

The TDE project receives referrals from and works collaboratively with the following organisations: Ipswich Disabled Advice Bureau; ACE Anglia; Suffolk Refugee Support; Essex University Law School; Norfolk & Suffolk Foundation Trust; Chapman Centre; East Suffolk Disabled Advice Service; SCODP; North East Suffolk Citizens Advice; Suffolk West Citizens Advice; Ipswich Citizens Advice; Ipswich Borough Council; Norfolk Community Law Service; Diss & Thetford Citizens Advice; the Bridge Project in Sudbury; Northgate High School; Thurston High School; Holbrook Academy; Ipswich Community Media; University of Suffolk; Suffolk Police; Suffolk Police & Crime Commissioner; ISCRE; and Big Society Funding CIC.

6. Concluding consultant observations

6.1 Following an external verification and review of the TDE project's own robust quantitative and qualitative monitoring procedures (from 2016 through to December 2018), conducting a sample survey, interviewing partner organisations and directly served beneficiaries, the consultant team is left in no doubt of the project's extensive and transformational positive impact on many socially disadvantaged people living in East Anglia, and on people who simply, without the provision of free legal advice and casework support, would not be able to affordably access it otherwise. This is a crucial factor, especially as the Project itself is the only one providing this type of service in the region. In addition, from this review it is clear that much of the TDE service demand is coming from vulnerable, income-deprived individuals facing disability discrimination relating to employment and service access: over 40% of beneficiaries. TDE's Project Manager may wish to reflect on this when looking to refine the service model and method of delivery; possibly more closely targeted and calibrated towards this particular cohort of beneficiaries. More than half of people accessing TDE have disabilities.

6.2 The complexity (and organisational time required) of the issues emanating from unlawful discrimination cases should not be under-estimated or lightly dismissed; the team have needed to invest considerable legal skills, tenacity and diligence into ensuring the multitude of successful outcomes for beneficiaries detailed in this report. As reported previously at the outset of the project in 2016, and despite a more sluggish and challenging start, the project continues to secure a host of very positive outcomes for beneficiaries, and for more of them. The TDE project as a core part of the new Suffolk Law Centre's service offer an increasing number of beneficiaries. Focused, and close attention to detail, day-to-day and strategic management are some of the standout features of the project and this review; and this is reflected in the ease with which the project is able to report on its success, achievements and impact.

6.3 The Tackling Discrimination in the East project is well on the way to becoming a national exemplar of good practice and excellence; and in fact it is already reported by Centre's Director that TDE's specific project advice and learning are being sought from elsewhere in the country. Much, therefore, for the TDE project's main funder, the Big Lottery Fund, to be pleased with. Its significant investment over more than five years has reaped considerable success for those it is charged with supporting as a grant funder.